

GENESIS AND REVISION OF *SKETCHES BY BOZ*

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There is little original in this paper. It is merely an effort to present in coordinated form for easy reference a collage of the essays of some distinguished scholars who have dealt with the surroundings of *Sketches by Boz*.⁽¹⁾ It is in reality impossible for students outside Dickens's mother-country England to examine and quote the original texts in several periodicals of his pieces or to give their own essays credit for originality and authenticity. They are obliged to make accurate use of the criticism of others, with more or less regret. This paper deals with the genesis and publication of the *Sketches* in various periodicals, their revision and collection for the two-volume edition of 1836 (Feb. and Dec.), their further revision for the monthly-part issues in 1837-39, eventually collected in the one-volume edition of 1839, and the final revision in 1850 for the Cheap Edition. They are followed by typical examples of revision in some aspects, and by a study of Dickens's intention and meaning in all his revision.

It is clear at a glance that he is endowed with a talent for journalism. As his many biographies show us, he would have succeeded as journalist (an editor or a newspaper reporter) to the extent of general recognition. He was, of course, unable to satisfy himself with such trifling jobs as these. His ambition was on a larger scale and was boundless. As a matter of fact, however, Dickens got deeply involved in the journalistic world of magazines from his very start as an author. The magazine was still one of his dreams since childhood, and his involvement in it tells us eloquently of the realization of his dream. His history of involvement begins with *Sketches by Boz*, the first of which is "A Dinner at Poplar Walk" (later "Mr. Minns and His Cousin") in the *Monthly Magazine*, Dec. 1833. Since then most of Dickens's works appeared in periodical magazines, and, as is the fate of periodical contribution, they underwent much revision in subsequent book editions. There is no other work with more revision than this collection. It has, for one reason, the longest period of time for revision, since it was published earliest; and for another, it seemed to its mature author imperfect and ill written. Its history of revision is fairly complicated, and

reflects Dickens's attitude toward the public reader and his intention as an artist. In other words, the Sketches may be said to be written with least design and plan. The reader is likely to perceive no authorial idea except what is called the sense of the city, which will be touched upon later. Dickens wrote most of them with youthful haste and energy, and put into them all that he had to express and make people know as an aspiring novice. They are therefore very free-handed and fresh, and so require revising in some editions.

Sketches by Boz, as available to the present reader, is the repeatedly arranged and edited edition of the original sixty separate pieces. In order to understand the relation of the original pieces to their later editions, we must see their chronology. But, as the spreading out in a list is very bulky here, I will substitute the ordering numbers (see TABLE 1) for it, and begin by grouping the pieces into their original several series in respective periodicals.

The earliest sketches appeared from Dec. 1833 to Feb. 1835 in the *Monthly Magazine* with no series title. The nine pieces (in the present edition, combined into seven) are rather farcical and form the most part of "Tales," one of the four groups in the present Sketches. Dickens, for the first time, in this magazine, used the famous pseudonym Boz for "The Boarding House. Chapter II" of Aug. 1834. In those days Dickens was, of course, unknown in the world, and the pieces were written for nothing, as part of his job. One piece, entitled "Original Papers" (later "Sentiment") was strangely enough contributed unsigned to *Bell's Weekly Magazine*, on June 7, 1834.

During 1834 he had been appointed a reporter on the staff of the *Morning Chronicle*, and for that journal he wrote five pieces under the title "Street Sketches." They appeared from Sep. 26 to Dec. 15, 1834. The *Morning Chronicle*, in 1835, established an evening edition, the *Evening Chronicle*, and for it also Dickens contributed a series of "Sketches of London." They began to come out from the first issue, Jan. 31, to Aug. 20, once a fortnight. The twenty pieces contain the six of "Our Parish," as well as "Gin-Shops," "Thought about People," and "The Pawnbroker's Shop."

After the stoppage of the series for some reason, Dickens sent others to other periodicals, one of which was *Bell's Life in London*. Under the title "Scenes and Characters" he worked out twelve pieces from Sep. 27, 1835, to Jan. 17, 1836. As the title shows, they form most of the "Characters" of the present Sketches.

Chapman and Hall were, just at that time, launching a new periodical, the *Library of Fiction*, and asked Dickens to write some pieces for it. These are "The Tuggses at Ramsgate" and "A Little Talk about Spring and the Sweeps" (later "The

First of May").

During the interruption of the two *Chronicles*, Dickens was busy preparing for the new periodical issues of *Pickwick Papers*. It was not until he managed to finish them that he could resume the sketches in the two *Chronicles* in the autumn of 1836. These were published under the title "Sketches by Boz, New Series." The four pieces appeared in both the *Chronicles*, first in *Morning* then in *Evening*, from Sep. 24 to Oct. 26, and contain the famous "Meditations in Monmouth Street" and "Scotland Yard."

About the same time Dickens contributed two pieces to the *Carlton Chronicle*, "The Hospital Patient" and "Hackney Cabs and Their Drivers," which later formed "The Last Cab-Driver and the First Omnibus Cad" together with "Some Account of an Omnibus Cad" (Nov. 1, 1835, in *Bell's Life in London*).

The pieces which I have thus far offered make only fifty-four. The rest of the sixty appear for the first time in the first book edition, First or Second Series. The six are excellent and attractive to us, and indeed deserve examining.

Dickens's history of contributing to periodicals was confused, as we have seen. What must be kept in mind is the relation between the publisher and the author. The intention of magazine publishers and their treatment of authors were various and unstable. It was fairly dissatisfactory to the aspiring Dickens.⁽³⁾

TABLE 1
SKETCHES BY BOZ, FIRST BOOK EDITION

(Key)

MM	The Monthly Magazine or British Register of Politics, Literature, Art, Science, and the Belles Lettres, New Series
BW	Bell's Weekly Magazine
MC	The Morning Chronicle
EC	The Evening Chronicle
BL	Bell's Life in London and Sporting Chronicle
CC	The Carlton Chronicle of Politics, Literature, Science and Art
LF	The Library of Fiction, or Family Storyteller
1st	<i>SB</i> , First Series
2nd	<i>SB</i> , Second Series

First Series (Feb. 1836)

Vol. I The Parish (six pieces)

(19) EC Chap. I The Beadle. The Parish Engine. The Schoolmaster

(27) EC Chap. II The Curate. The Old Lady. The Captain

- (29) EC Chap. III The Four Sisters
- (31) EC Chap. IV The Election for Beadle
- (33) EC Cap. V The Broker's Man
- (35) EC Chap. VI The Ladies' Societies
- (37) BL Miss Evans and "The Eagle"
- (10) MC Shops and Their Tenants
- (25) EC Thoughts about People
- (48) 1st A Visit to Newgate
- (21) MC London Recreations
- (5) MM The Boarding House. Chap. I
- (7) MM The Boarding House. Chap. II
- (15) MC Hackney-Coach Stands
- (13) MC Brokers' and Marine Store Shops
- (4) MM The Bloomsbury Christening
- (17) MC Gin-Shops
- (22) EC Public Dinners
- (26) EC Astley's
- (24) EC Greenwich Fair
- (43) BL The Prisoners' Van
- (45) BL A Christmas Dinner
- Vol. II (14) MM Passage in the Life of Mr. Watkins Tottle. Chap. I
- (16) MM Passage in the Life of Mr. Watkins Tottle. Chap. II
- (49) 1st The Black Veil
- (12) MC Shabby-Genteel People
- (3) MM Horatio Sparkins
- (30) EC The Pawnbroker's Shop
- (38) BL The Dancing Academy
- (18) EC Early Coaches
- (28) EC The River
- (34) EC Private Theatres
- (50) 1st The Great Winglebury Duel
- (8) MC Omnibuses
- (2) MM Mrs. Joseph Porter
- (9) MM The Steam Excursion
- (6) BW Sentiment

Second Series (Dec. 1836)

- (32) EC The Streets by Morning
- (47) EC The Streets by Night
- (39) BL Making a Night of It
- (11) MC Criminal Courts
- (56) BL Scotland Yard
- (46) BL The New Year
- (55) MC Meditations in Monmouth Street
- (59) 2nd Our Next-Door Neighbours
- (53) CC The Hospital Patient
- (36) EC Seven Dials
- (42) BL The Mistaken Milliner. A Tale of Ambition
- (57) MC Doctors' Commons
- (40) BL Misplaced Attachment of Mr. John Dounce
- (58) MC Vauxhall Gardens by Day
- (20) & (23) EC A Parliamentary Sketch. With a Few Portraits
- (1) MM Mr. Minns and His Cousin
- (41) & (54) BL The Last Cab-Driver, and the First Omnibus Cad
- (44) BL The Parlour Orator
- (52) LF The First of May
- (60) 2nd The Drunkard's Death

Sources: DeVries, *Dickens Apprentice Years*, Appendix A, and Grillo, *Sketches by Boz*, Chap. Five.

Note: Numerals in parentheses mean chronological order among the original sixty pieces, which have been eventually reduced to fifty-six with some combined through revision.

The success of the periodical sketches and stories led to their publication in book form as *Sketches by Boz, First Series*, in Feb. 1836. That was just before the commencement of the publication of *Pickwick Papers*. Dickens selected, revised, and arranged the pieces for this edition, and also undertook to supply three additional pieces (in TABLE 1, indicated by "1st"). The original series in most periodicals were broken up. The arrangement of the pieces in this edition shows that Dickens uses "The Parish" (six pieces) to establish a sort of keynote which, as a whole, gives the reader impressions of village-like intimacy and pastoral innocence. "The Parish" reminds us of his favourite country town Chatham. The rest offer sheer variety. No

classification is to be seen in their line-up, all mixed together. We would rather say that he aims at a contrast between the light and the dark of the city. The dismal "A Visit to Newgate" is followed by the happy "London Recreations," the miserable "The Prisoners' Van" by the blissful "A Christmas Dinner," and the comical "Mr. Watkins Tottle" by the macabre "The Black Veil."

The extensive revision by Dickens can be divided into two categories, as Mrs. Tillotson calls them (p. 45), mechanical and editorial. The former includes those changes which were necessary to adopt the periodical to book form: by removal of series headings and the likes, re-paragraphing into shorter ones suitable to book, elimination of some opening and ending paragraphs, many of which were meant only to attract the periodical reader, such as seasonal greetings or suggestions of the next subject.⁽⁴⁾ Mechanical revision may also include elimination because of the lack of space. According to Mrs. Tillotson (p. 44), the first half of "The Prisoners' Van" was deleted already in its periodical, which can be thought to be "not only exceptionally racy and vivid, but providing the best early example of Dickens's trick (to be elaborated in *Oliver Twist*) of dealing with low life in a detached and whimsical style." The latter (editorial) indicates Dickens's change from a periodical grub to a popular author. He eliminates partisan comments, softens social satire, removes identical topicalities, and abates political allusions. Although the modern reader, of course, cannot enjoy Dickens's severe satire or sharp attack on something in a true sense, he is informed by Mrs. Tillotson how often Dickens resorts to political or topical allusion in attracting the reader.

Of the excluded pieces from the First Series (thirteen pieces) many are, as she has noted, the "Sketches containing specifically 'political' allusions" (p. 46), in which the real models can easily be identified. There seems to be another simple reason: the lack of time for revising into readable form. There was enough time for it before the Second Series, Dec. 1836. At any rate, "no tale . . . revised so thoroughly" as the excluded ones from the First Series (p. 43). Another editorial revision is the removal of the touches of indelicacy and profanity. Because women were supposed to be included in the new audience of the book edition, Dickens had to prepare for it. We can call it Victorian euphemism.

There was a general and stable tendency among the readers, above all female, to reject expressions of sex and even the slightest hint at it. Authors were not able to present a prostitute in an appearance that made the reader recognize her at a glance, still less describe her in a favourable way or with much sympathy as for an ordinary human being. Most publishers required authors to make their writings perfect in

terms of sexual morality. Both sides assumed the attitude of rigidity toward sexual description in the Victorian Age. It is, therefore, not surprising that we cannot find any direct or indirect expression of indelicacy: any kind of underclothes, whisperings of lovers, prostitute, etc. *Sketches by Boz* deals with the dark underworld less often and directly than *Oliver Twist* and other novels. However, some explicit examples are to be seen. Mrs. Tillotson mentions an example in "The Four Sisters" ("Our Parish," Chap. III), in which Dickens omitted phrases indicating pregnancy even in a slight degree (p. 48). Another, which was not revised, is here. In sketching the streets in the early morning, Dickens provides their emptiness with the metaphor of death.

The drunken, the dissipated, and the wretched have disappeared; the more sober and orderly part of the population have not yet awakened to the labours of the day, and the stillness of death is over the streets; its very hue seems to be imparted to them, cold and lifeless as they look in the grey, somble light of daybreak. The coach-stands in the larger thoroughfares are deserted; the night-houses are closed; and the chosen promenades of profligate misery are empty. (SB 47)

Many readers would fail to understand the phrase, "the chosen promenades of profligate misery," without a little help of some flashing idea. The combination of "profligate" and "misery" and, in addition, "chosen" is excellent. It is exactly an euphemism. The phrase means "the lanes of prostitutes."

When we think of Dickens's revision and euphemism, a crucial point is, as Humphry House emphasizes in *The Dickens World* (Oxford Univ. Press, 1941), "the distinction" "between reticence in speech and reticence in idea" (pp. 217-18). "He did not escape in his language (which was studiously modified even when his indignation was greatest); but he did not escape in his ideas either" (p. 219). He is undoubtedly right in asserting Dickens's honesty to his conscience. But Mr. House adds the idea that Dickens was stamped with "the morality of a middle, an ambiguous, class" (p. 219). The testimony is that "[t]he process of censorship which made him conceal for years the proletarian episode in his own boyhood was similar to that which was constantly at work in his fiction" (p. 220).

Thus the First Series became a far more gentle and harmonious picture of British society than Dickens presented in the original periodicals.

The First Series was also greeted with general applause, and a further Series was

collected in the December of that year. It comprises the pieces excluded from and published after the First Series, with the sole exception of "The Tuggses at Ramsgate" (presumably because of its length), and the two newly written pieces in particular. At this publication, of course, those unfavourable parts of the excluded pieces which have been pointed out above, were revised. The pieces which were published after the First Series also underwent some alterations akin to those of the First Series. The first book edition of the two Series, as a whole, was conservative and reasonable in such a progression of revision as this. In comparison with the First Series there also seems less specific intention in the arrangement of the contents, because this Series is the collecting of the rest that had not been included.

Any reader of the present Sketches would have noticed a certain redundancy of character and subject in all the pieces. This is because, as Mr. Grillo points out, the contemporary public read them periodically one by one and because Dickens wrote them for different periodicals or audiences (p. 92). And in addition, he may have hit upon a significant idea, on close examination, that at specific periods Dickens assumes specific tones in writing.⁽⁵⁾ It seems indeed true that, for instance, there is a common prevailing tone of pessimistic melodrama and determinism in "The Hospital Patient," "Meditations in Monmouth Street," "Our Next-Door Neighbours", and "The Drunkard's Death," which range from Aug. to Dec. 1836.

TABLE 2
SKETCHES BY BOZ, ONE-VOLUME EDITION
(May 1839, identical to the contents of the present edition)

Our Parish

- I (19) The Beadle. The Parish Engine. The Schoolmaster
- II (27) The Curate. The Old Lady. The Half-Pay Captain
- III (29) The Four Sisters
- IV (31) The Election for Beadle
- V (33) The Broker's Man
- VI (35) The Ladies' Societies
- VII (59) Our Next-Door Neighbours

Scenes

- I (32) The Streets—Morning
- II (47) The Streets—Night
- III (10) Shops and Their Tenants
- IV (56) Scotland Yard
- V (36) Seven Dials

- VI (55) Meditations in Monmouth Street
- VII (15) Hackney-Coach Stands
- VIII (57) Doctors' Commons
- IX (21) London Recreations
- X (28) The River
- XI (26) Astley's
- XII (24) Greenwich Fair
- XIII (34) Private Theatres
- XIV (58) Vauxhall Gardens by Day
- XV (18) Early Coaches
- XVI (8) Omnibuses
- XVII (41)&(54) The Last Cab-Driver, and the First Omnibus Cad
- XVIII (20)&(23) A Parliamentary Sketch
- XIX (22) Public Dinners
- XX (52) The First of May
- XXI (13) Brokers' and Marine-Store Shops
- XXII (17) Gin-Shops
- XXIII (30) The Pawnbroker's Shop
- XXIV (11) Criminal Courts
- XXV (48) A Visit to Newgate

Characters

- I (25) Thoughts about People
- II (45) A Christmas Dinner
- III (46) The New Year
- IV (37) Miss Evans and the Eagle
- V (44) The Parlour Orator
- VI (53) The Hospital Patient
- VII (40) The Misplaced attachment of Mr. John Dounce
- VIII (42) The Mistaken Milliner. A Tale of Ambition
- IX (38) The Dancing Academy
- X (12) Shabby-Genteel People
- XI (39) Making a Night of It
- XII (43) The Prisoners' Van

Tales

- I (5)&(7) The Boarding-House
- II (1) Mr. Minns and His Cousin
- III (6) Sentiment
- IV (51) The Tuggses at Ramsgate
- V (3) Horatio Sparkins
- VI (49) The Black Veil
- VII (9) The Steam Excursion
- VIII (50) The Great Winglebury Duel

- IX (2) Mrs. Joseph Porter
 X (14)&(16) A Passage in the Life of Mr. Watkins Tottle
 XI (4) The Bloomsbury Christening
 XII (60) The Drunkard's Death

Sources: See TABLE 1.

Note: Minor change, as in punctuation, are not indicated.

Along with the transfer of the copyright of *Sketches by Boz* from Macrone to Chapman and Hall in 1837, the Sketches began to be issued in monthly parts (twenty parts from Nov. 1837 to June 1839), and eventually appeared, for the first time, in one volume in May 1839. This edition is the basis of all editions thereafter. Dickens again revised it a little and rearranged the pieces. The textual changes are rather minor compared with the new grouping and ordering of the contents, which remains in the present Sketches. In this final organization, Dickens at last offered the characteristic classification: "Our Parish," "Scenes," "Characters," and "Tales." There remains little which relates his intentional tactics in the classification, and we are obliged to guess it from its circumstances. In my first printed paper — "Dickens and *Sketches by Boz*" *Soundings*, 11 (1985) — it was fully discussed with some pieces analyzed.

The whole of this edition was further revised. This means the changes that cannot be ascribed simply to the transfer from periodical to book form. Dickens had "a keener sense of his audience and of his responsibilities toward it; he was rising socially, and possibly especially sensitive to imputations of vulgarity: (Mrs. Tillotson, p. 57). Most of the strong language is modified or removed, and slang expressions also (in the narrative) such as "goes of gin," "come-up-to-the-scratch kind of manner" and even simple colloquialisms like "em" and "wasn't". Humorous similes and elaborate puns, too, were cut. Dickens's punning is not so famous, because it faded away in the course of his career, but in his early days, punning plays an important role in sketches and stories.

Lastly, the revision of the Cheap Edition in 1850 needs to be touched upon, but it is rather minor and has little to do with this paper.

NOTES

1. This paper owes much to Kathleen Tillotson, "*Sketches by Boz*: Collection and Revision," in her and John Butt's *Dickens at Work* (London: Methuen, 1957), pp. 35-61 (Preface says it is mainly hers) ; to Virgil Grillo, "Revisions for synthesis," in his *Charles Dickens' Sketches by Boz: End in the Beginning* (Boulder, Colorado: Colorado Associated Univ. Press, 1974), pp. 85-

117; to Duanne DeVries, *Dickens's Apprentice Years* (New York: Harvester Press, 1976), passim; and to T. Kent Brumleigh, "Journalistics," the *Dickensian*, 48(1952), 82-89.

2. As the first book-form edition of *Sketches by Boz* (two Series, Feb. and Dec. 1836) overlaps with the next periodical writings of *Pickwick Papers* (begun in March 1836), not unexpectedly they reveal an interesting parallel with each other in subject matter and topic.

3. The contemporary situation and historical background of his contributing magazines are closely examined in "Dickens, the Two *Chronicles*, and the Publication of *Sketches by Boz*," *Dickens Studies Annual*, 9 (1982), 21-32, by Richard Maxwell. The quality of the magazines' audience, especially whether metropolitan or rural, had a great influence upon Dickens, who was aiming at the city dweller as the reader of his metropolitan sketches.

4. The pieces which underwent the elimination amount to eleven only in the First Series. No mention will be required here.

5. Mr. Grillo discusses the problem of textual tone, too (p. 94). In order to go on with this point, much more comparative study of the Sketches will be required.